2: Henry E-5 (1932-1934) 1941
SM3 Caingang SM3
Aweikoma

III

Sexual Relations and Marriage

EVEN KAINGÁNG BABIES LEARN that the terms connected with sex have an aura of laughter and spice. *Waikó*, to copulate; *waindjã*, to have an affair; *mbâdn*, lover or husband; *plų*, wife or sweetheart; *ênglânglé*, my co-spouse, are some of the terms which, brought into a conversation, occasion any amount of smirking, tittering and laughing. The sexuality of little boys is stimulated by their mothers by manipulation of the genitals before they can walk. Although little children of two and three are told jocularly to copulate with one another, their attention is directed toward adults. A boy of three has already learnt to say, in answer to the question, "With whom do you copulate," "With Waikome," who may be his grandfather's sister. Babies are jokingly told to copulate with people anywhere from ten to twenty times their age, and a man sixty-five years old will call a toddler of three "my co-husband." Children of all ages are pressed into service to remove ticks, and it is not at all uncommon to see a little girl of five or six hovering over a supine man picking the ticks off his genitals.

A child soon learns to repeat the jokes that go around the campfire and to shout gleefully, "You copulate with your first cousin!" A boy of nine is jokingly taunted with masturbation, told that he has deflowered his fifteen-year-old cousin, or accused of wanting to copulate with a dog. As two dogs copulate the entire camp roars with laughter and a little girl of six cries delightedly, "They are copulating!" The children may see the boisterous open foreplay of the adults and glimpse the sexual act in the dim light of the early morning.

Yet with all of this I never saw or heard of intercourse among children. Jokes about the love affairs of children among themselves are never made by the adults nor by the children. The children receive so much satisfaction

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from adults it is hard to see why they should bother with one another.[1] They are at the beck and call of anyone who wants a warm little body to caress. As Monyá, age two, wobbles by on fat uncertain legs Kanyahé calls to him. He slowly overcomes the momentum of his walk, turns about, smiles and wobbles obediently over to Kanyahé. Children lie like cats absorbing the delicious stroking of adults. The little children receive an enormous amount of adult attention and one never sees them caress one another or lie down together. It is impossible to keep track of children around the campfire. By choice and from necessity they literally sleep all over the place. They like to cuddle next to an uncle, aunt or step-mother. In the winter when there may be only one blanket to shelter a family, the little ones are driven to crawling under the cover of someone else who welcomes the additional warmth of the little bundle. This wandering around often culminates in the sexual experience to which the grown-ups are eager to introduce the child, and he is generally enjoyed first by a person much older than he. Some married men have nicknames that bear a humorous reference to their experience in trying to deflower young girls. Yakwá was called, "You pierced your mother" because he had deflowered a young girl who had the same name as his mother. Kovi received a nickname because his first cousin clawed his penis when he tried to deflower her. The growing child's sexual experience is primarily humorous, often illicit, administered by adults, and apt to be violent in the case of girls.

When the children grow up to be young men and women a strange dichotomy of behavior is noticeable, which is all the more striking because the Kaingáng lay no emphasis on such differences. Kaingáng young men love to sleep together. At night they call to one another, "Come and lie down here with me, with *me!*" Then there is a shifting and squirming so that Nggugn or Waipó or Kanyahé can lie down where he is bidden. In camp one sees young men caressing. Married and unmarried young men lie cheek by jowl, arms around one another, legs slung across bodies, for all the world like lovers in our own society. Sometimes they lie caressing that way in little knots of three or four. Women never do these things. I have never seen any signs of complete homosexual relations among the men or women. I have sat night after night talking to knots of young men, and I have seen them caressing one another in an absolutely open fashion in the broad light of day. But I never saw them make an overt sexual gesture. In other cultures and even in our own one may see young men continually

[1] This whole situation contrasts strikingly with what I observed among the Pilagá Indians (MSS in preparation). There the children receive slight attention from the adults. Sexual intercourse begins at about 5 years and most of the sexual play of the children is perfectly open. Everyone talks and jokes about the sexual affairs of the children.

[171] Unlike their neighbors in JUNGLE PEOPLE
831 Paraná the Kaingáng have no love magic. They are, in general, a very practical and aggressive people and not given to the use of charms. They view all people but little children as spontaneously, vigorously and indiscriminately sexual, and act accordingly.

The young man who, urged at last by his desire for a woman to cook and keep house for him, and the young woman who, impelled by her wish to have someone who will constantly care for her, at last settle down with a spouse, have this background of philandering, jesting and frequently adulterous sexual experience that will color married life into old age. Kaingáng men and women are not advised by their parents to be [964] faithful to one another. The only case I heard of is that of Amendó who was one of the wives of Wanyekí. When she and her sisters married him her mother said to her: "Live with him. If they leave him, you remain with him." And she always did.[2]

581 In our society the traditional, the ideal stabilizer of marriage is love—an
586 exclusive sex interest in one person. The Kaingáng have no tradition, no background for the development of such an interest. Marriage in other [583] primitive societies is sometimes stabilized by a large payment for the bride, but in Kaingáng society there is no such payment. If a woman leaves her husband she can always find a relative who will take care of her. Her brother or her cousin or her sister will always take her in, and although she lacks the full security that marriage gave her she need not starve, for there are any number of men who will accept her as an added responsibility without complaint, even boasting a little that they took care of her and that she called them *yúgn*.[3] Besides having this dependable bulwark to her security a woman's own aggressiveness makes it far easier for her to get another husband than for a woman in a similar position in our society. When a woman is left without a husband the liaisons which she has established surreptitiously serve her in good stead, for then one of her lovers may become her new husband.[4]

586 Chukembégn had been having some trouble with his wife, Chantágn. When he left her for a few days to go hunting he told his hunting companions that he was going to leave his wife. News got back to the post before he returned. One day Chantágn, who had previously amused herself by casual approaches to me, called me. I came out of my house and sat down where anyone who happened to be around could see us. "What do

[2] See p. 30. These people have been long dead.

[3] See Appendix II, p. 177. Such a woman can partially earn her keep by gathering fruit and wood, helping with the cooking and the children, and clearing the ground for camp sites. If she has lovers they will contribute to the family larder.

[4] Sometimes, though rarely, former husbands may become lovers, but this does not occur where the woman herself has rejected them as husbands.